

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY LA PAZ

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INFO USMISSION GENEVA

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E.O. 11652: N/A

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SUBJ: AMBASSADOR VANCE'S VISIT TO BOLIVIA

1. AMBASSADOR VANCE ARRIVED IN BOLIVIA ON JANUARY 13 AND DEPARTED EARLY IN THE MORNING ON JANUARY 17. DURING HIS STAY IN BOLIVIA HE MET WITH THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC, WITH THE MINISTERS OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, PLANNING AND COORDINATION, INTERIOR, AGRICULTURE, WITH THE NATIONAL DIRECTOR FOR NARCOTICS AND HIS STAFF, WITH THE DIRECTOR OF CUSTOMS, WITH THE UNDERSECRETARIES OF THE MINISTRIES OF EDUCATION, HEALTH, AGRICULTURE, INTERIOR, AND WITH SOME CAMPESINO COMMUNITY LEADERS IN THE INTERIOR OF THE COUNTRY.

2. ON JANUARY 14 HE AND HIS PARTY TRAVELED TO THE YUNGAS AREA OF BOLIVIA (FAMOUS FOR ITS COCA PRODUCTION) ESCORTED BY THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE AND CAMPESINO AFFAIRS, THE NATIONAL DIRECTOR FOR NARCOTICS, THE NATIONAL DIRECTOR OF AGRICULTURE AND THE DIRECTOR OF THE NATIONAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT SERVICE. THIS

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GAVE HIM THE OPPORTUNITY TO SEE THE EXTENT OF THE

COCA PLANTATIONS AND TO PARTICIPATE IN FRANK DISCUSSIONS BETWEEN CAMPESINO LEADERS AND THE MINISTER CONCERNING THE GOVERNMENT'S PLANS FOR CROP SUBSTITUTION.

3. ON JANUARY 15 BANCE MADE A FORMAL CALL ON THE FOREIGN MINISTER WHO THEN ACCOMPANIED AMBASSADORS VANCE AND STEDMAN FOR AN AUDIENCE WITH PRESIDENT BANZER. THESE MEETINGS WERE EXCEPTIONALLY CORDIAL ANASLASTED FOR A TOTAL OF 90 MINUTES. BANZER OPENED THE CONVERSATION BY NOTING THAT PREVIOUS BOLIVIAN GOVERNMENTS HAD MADE LITTLE, IF ANY, EFFORT TO COMBAT THE ILLICIT MANUFACTURING AND TRAFFICKING OF NARCOTICS IN BOLIVIA, BUT THAT IN HIS ADMINISTRATION THIS WAS A MAJOR POLICY PLANK. HE SAID THAT THE PACE OF SEZUIRES AND ARRESTS HAD QUICKENED NOTABLY IN THE PAST YEAR AND THAT THE OVERALL EFFORT WOULD BE FURTHER STRENGTHENED. AMBASSADOR VANCE, IN HIS RESPONSE, EXPRESSED THE APPRECIATION OF THE US GOVERNMENT AND THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY ENTITIES INVOLVED IN NARCOTICS PROGRAMS FOR THE DECISIVE POSTURE ADOPTED BY THE PRESIDENT AND OTHER MEMBERS OF HIS ADMINISTRATION ON THIS QUESTION, PARTICULARLY THE PRESIDENT'S UNGA SPEECH LAST OCTOBER AND HIS GOVERNMENT'S RECENT RATIFICATION OF THE SINGLE CONVENTION. HE ASSURED THE PRESIDENT OF THE CONTINUING DESIRE OF THE US GOVERNMENT TO ASSIST THE BOLIVIAN GOVERNMENT IN ITS NARCOTICS CONTROL PROGRAMS.

4. THE PRESIDENT NOTED THE DIFFICULT SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL SITUATION THAT COULD BE DEVELOPED BY AN ARBITRARY AND PRECIPITOUS POLICY OF COCA CROP ERADICATION, EXPLAINING THAT BOTH THE PRODUCTION AND CONSUMPTION OF COCA LEAF IN BOLIVIAN WERE TRADITIONAL AND WOULD REQUIRE AN EDUCATIONAL PROCESS AND SOME FORM OF INCOME SUBSTITUTION FOR THE AFFECTED FARMERS IN ORDER TO SIGNIFICANTLY REDUCE COCA PRODUCTION. VANCE EXPRESSED FULL UNDERSTANDING OF THESE ASPECTS OF THE NARCOTICS PROBLEM IN BOLIVIA AND ASSURED THE PRESIDENT THAT THE US GOVERNMENT HAS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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NO DESIRE TO CAUSE ITS FRIENDS THE KINDS OF PROBLEMS THAT WOULD BE CREATED BY ATTEMPTING AN OVERNIGHT ELIMINATION OF COCA PRODUCTION. HE EXPLAINED TO THE PRESIDENT THAT HIS OFFICE CONTROLS FUNDS WHICH WILL BE USED TO FINANCE TWO GOB STUDIES INVOLVING COCA. ONE STUDY WOULD DEVELOP INFORMATION ON THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS OF CROP SUBSTITUTION AND THE OTHER WOULD EVALUATE THE POSSIBLE ALTERNATIVE

CROPS AND INPUTS REQUIRED TO PROVIDE FARMERS WITH INCOMES AFTER THEY HAVE STOPPED GROWING COCA. IF THE BOLIVIAN AND US GOVERNMENTS SHOULD DECIDE THAT THE DATA DEVELOPED FROM THESE STUDIES WARRANTS A NATIONWIDE COCA CROP SUBSTITUTION PROGRAM, THE NARCOTICS FUNDS HE CONTROLS WOULD BE INSUFFICIENT, VANCE SAID. HOWEVER, VANCE ASSURED THE PRESIDENT THAT WE WOULD WISH TO CONSIDER PARTICIPATION IN SUCH A BOLIVIAN ENTERPRISE. ALSO, IF THE BOLIVIAN GOVERNMENT SO DESIRED, THE US GOVERNMENT COULD HELP IT FORM A CONSORTIUM OF INTERNATIONAL FINANCING ENTITIES TO HELP WITH THE PROGRAM. PRESIDENT BANZER EXPRESSED HIS COMPLETE APPROVAL OF SUCH AN APPROACH AND HIS APPRECIATION FOR AMBASSADOR VANCE'S UNDERSTANDING OF THE PROBLEM. VANCE EXPLAINED THE CONNECTION IN COCAINE PROCESSING AND TRAFFICKING BETWEEN BOLIVIA, PERU, ECUADO AND COLOMBIA AND SUGGESTED THAT IT MIGHT BE USEFUL TO CHARGE SOME REGIONAL ORGANIZATION, PERHAPS THE ANDEAN PACT, WITH SOME RESPONSIBILITY FOR FOCUSING ON THIS ASPECT OF THE NARCOTICS BUSINESS. THE PRESIDENT THOUGHT THIS WAS A GOOD IDEA AND IMMEDIATELY CHARGED THE FOREIGN MINISTER WITH THE TASK OF PREPARING RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPLEMENT THE IDEA.

5. FOLLOWING A BRIEF DISCUSSION OF THE GROWING PROBLEM OF NARCOTICS USE IN BOLIVIA AS WELL AS IN OTHER PARTS OF THE WORLD, VANCE SUGGESTED THAT AN EXCHANGE OF EXPERTS IN THE AREAS OF PREVENTION, EDUCATION, AND REHABILITATION MIGHT BE USEFUL TO BOTH COUNTRIES. THIS SUGGESTION WAS WELCOMED BY THE PRESIDENT. THE MEETING ENDED WITH RENEWED ASSURANCES BY THE PRESIDENT THAT BOLIVIA WAS ANXIOUS TO COOPERATE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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WITH THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY IN NARCOTICS CONTROL AND THAT THE US COULD COUNT ON THE BANZER ADMINISTRATION IN THIS REGARD.

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6. VANCE THEN ATTENDED A JOINT MEETING OF THE BOLIVIAN AND AMERICAN NARCOTICS COMMITTEES, CHAIRED BY THE UNDERSECRETARY OF THE MINISTRY OF INTERIOR. THIS MEETING AFFORDED VANCE THE OPPORTUNITY TO HEAR AT FIRST HAND THE PLANS OF THE BOLIVIAN GOVERNMENT IN NARCOTICS CONTROL AND CROP CONTROL. HE TOOK THE OPPORTUNITY TO EXPLAIN THE ROLE OF HIS OFFICE AS WELL AS THE HOPES AND LIMITATIONS OF THE USG AS REGARDS THE BOLIVIAN PROGRAM. ONE OUTCOME OF THIS MEETING WAS AGREEMENT BY THE CHAIRMAN TO RAISE WITH HIS SUPERIORS THE NEED TO FORM A WORKING LEVEL GROUP, SIMILAR TO THE ONE ON INTERNATIONAL MATTERS CHAIRED BY AMBASSADOR VANCE IN THE US, TO COORDINATE NARCOTICS RELATED WORK WHICH IS OR COULD BE PERFORMED BY OTHER MINISTRIES OF THE GOB (AS A PRACTICAL MATTER THERE HAS BEEN SOME LOWER LEVEL COORDINATION BETWEEN THE NATIONAL DIRECTOR OF NARCOTICS AND THE MINISTRIES OF AGRICULTURE AND PLANNING AND COORDINATION, BUT NOT THE HIGHER LEVEL COORDINATION REQUIRED AND MADE POSSIBLE BY A MORE FORMAL STRUCTURE). SUBSEQUENTLY, VANCE BROACHED THIS SUBJECT WITH THE MINISTER OF COORDINATION AND PLANNING WHO AGREED THAT IT WAS A LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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GOOD IDEA AND THAT AS THE COORDINATOR AT THE POLITICAL (MINISTERS) LEVEL, HE IS THE LOGICAL ONE TO FOLLOW-UP ON THE CREATION OF AN INTER-MINISTERIAL COORDINATING BODY AT THE EXECUTIVE LEVEL.

7. THAT EVENING AMBASSADOR VANCE HELD A PRESS

CONFERENCE AT THE EMBASSY DURING WHICH HE COVERED THE POINTS RAISED WITH GOB OFFICIALS MORE OR LESS AS DESCRIBED ABOVE. (HE AND AMBASSADOR STEDMAN HAD OBTAINED PRESIDENT BANZER'S APPROVAL EARLIER FOR SUCH A CONFERENCE). THIS RECEIVED FAVORABLE AND WIDESPREAD COVERAGE IN THE MORNING PRESS ON JANUARY 16. HIGHLIGHTED WERE REFERENCES TO THE IMPENDING SIGNING OF BILATERAL AGREEMENTS IN NARCOTICS CONTROL, AND VANCE'S EXPRESSIONS OF GRATIFICATION CONCERNING THE VERY CLEAR COMMITMENT OF THE BOLIVIAN GOVERNMENT TO COOPERATE IN THE INTERNATIONAL STRUGGLE AGAINST ILLICIT NARCOTICS TRAFFICKING.

8. AT THE LUNCH ON JANUARY 16 HOSTED BY THE MINISTER OF INTERIOR, HE TOLD AMBASSADOR VANCE THAT PRESIDENT BANZER HAD TOLD HIM THAT MORNING HOW PLEASED HE WAS WITH VANCE'S VISIT AND THE EXCHANGE OF VIEWS THAT HAD TAKEN PLACE. VANCE TALKED BRIEFLY WITH THE MAYOR OF LA PAZ WHO EXPRESSED INTEREST IN COOPERATING IN THE NARCOTICS FIGHT, PERHAPS THROUGH CONSTRUCTION OF MARKET AND STORAGE AREAS FOR PRODUCTS FROM THE UNGAS, EXCLUDING COCA LEAF.

9. COMMENT: ALL US HERE INVOLVED IN NARCOTICS MATTERS ARE UNIFORMLY OF THE OPINION THAT AMBASSADOR VANCE'S VISIT WAS MOST USEFUL IN REAFFIRMING THE COMMITMENT OF THE GOB FROM THE PRESIDENT DOWN TO COOPERATE IN NARCOTICS CONTROL AND THAT IT WILL HAVE STIMULATED OR REINFORCED A NUMBER OF ACTIONS AND DECISIONS BY THE GOB FAVORING BETTER COORDINATION OF ITS OWN EFFORTS AND THE ALLOCATION OF INCREASED RESOURCES TO THE NARCOTICS PROGRAM.
STEDMAN

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